

T H E
L O U N G E R.

[N^o XC.]

Saturday, Oct. 21. 1786.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

THOUGH, from my rank in life, being a tradesman's daughter, left an orphan at six years old, I had little title to know any thing about sensibility or feeling; yet having been very kindly taken into a family, where there were several young Ladies who were great readers, I had opportunities of hearing a good deal about these things. By the same young Ladies I was made acquainted with your paper, and it was a favourite employment of mine to read the *Lounger* to them every Saturday morning. In one of the Numbers published some time ago, we met with *Mrs Alice Heartly's* account of an old Lady with whom she lives; and from the experience of our own feelings, could not help pitying the connection with one so destitute of all tender sentiment as my Lady *Bidmore*. I had soon after occasion to congratulate myself on a very different sort of establishment, having been recommended by my young patronesses to a Lady, who used frequently to visit at their house, whom we all knew (indeed it was her pride, she used to say, to acknowledge her weakness on that side) to be a perfect pattern, or, according to her own phrase, a perfect martyr of the most acute and delicate sensibility. At our house I saw her once in the greatest distress imaginable, from the accidental drowning of a fly in the cream-pot; and got great credit with her myself, for my tenderness about a goldfinch belonging to one of our young Ladies, which I had taught to perch upon my shoulder, and pick little crumbs out of my mouth. I shall never forget *Mrs Sensitive's* crying out, "Oh! how I envy her the sweet little creature's kisses!" It made me blush to hear her speak so; for I had never thought of kisses in the matter.

This little circumstance, however, procured me her favour so much, that, on being told of my situation, she begged I might, as she was kind enough to express it, be placed under her protection. As I had heard so much of her tender-heartedness and her feeling; as she was very rich, having been left a widow, with the disposal of her husband's whole fortune; as she had no body but herself in family, so that it promised to be an easy place; all these things made me very happy to accept of her offer; and I agreed to go home to her house immediately, her last attendant having left her somewhat

suddenly. I heard indeed, the very morning after I went thither, that her servants did not use to stay long with her; which gave me some little uneasiness; but she took occasion to inform me, that it was entirely owing to their cruelty and want of feeling, having turned them all off for some neglect or ill usage of her little family, as she called it. This little family, of which I had not heard before, consists of a number of birds and beasts, which it is the great pleasure of Mrs Sensitive's life to keep and to fondle, and on which she is constantly exercising her sensibilities, as she says. My chief employment is to assist her in the care of them.

The waiting on this family of Mrs Sensitive's is not so easy a task as I at first had flattered myself it would have been. We have three lap-dogs, four cats, some of the ladies of which are almost always lying in, a monkey, a flying squirrel, two parrots, a parrot-quet, a Virginia nightingale, a jack-daw, an owl, besides half a hundred smaller birds, bulfinches, canaries, linnets, and white sparrows. We have a dormouse in a box, a set of Guinea pigs in the garret, and a tame otter in the cellar; besides out-pensioners of pigeons and crows at our windows, and mice that come from a hole in the parlour wainscotting, to visit us at breakfast and dinner time. All these I am obliged to tend and watch with the utmost care and assiduity; not only to take care that their food and their drink be in plenty, and good order; not only to wash the lap-dogs, and to comb the cats, to play on the bird-organ for the instruction of the canaries and gold finches, and to speak to the parrots and jack-daw for theirs; but I must accommodate myself, as my mistress says, to the feelings of the sweet creatures; I must contribute to their amusement, and keep them in good spirits; I must scratch the heads of the parrots; I must laugh to the monkey, and play at cork-balls with the kittens. Mrs Sensitive says, she can understand their looks and their language from *sympathy*; and that she is sure it must delight every susceptible mind to have thus an opportunity for extending the sphere of its sensibilities.

She sometimes takes an opportunity of extending something else with poor me. You can hardly suppose what a passion she gets into, if any thing about this family of hers is neglected; and when she chuses to be angry, and speak her mind to me a little loud or so, her favourites, I suppose from sympathy too, join in the remonstrance, and make such a concert!—What between the lap-dogs, the parrots, the jack-daw, and the monkey, there is such a barking, squalling, cawing, and chattering!—Mrs Sensitive's ears are not so easily hurt as her feelings.

But the misfortune is, Mr Lounger, that her feelings are only made for brute creatures, and don't extend to us poor Christians

of

of the family. She has no pity on us, no sympathy in the world for our distresses. She keeps a chambermaid and a boy besides myself; and I assure you it does not fare near so well with us as it does with the lap-dogs and the monkey. Nay, I have heard an old milk-woman say, who has been long about the family, that Mr Sensitive himself was not treated altogether so kindly as some of his Lady's four-footed favourites. He was, it seems, a good-natured man, and not much given to complain. The old woman says, she never heard of his finding fault with any thing, but once that Mrs Sensitive insisted on taking into bed a Bologna greyhound, because she said it could not sleep a-nights, from the coldness of the climate in this country. Yet she often talks of her dear dear Mr Sensitive, and weeps when she talks of him; and she has got a fine tomb-stone raised over his grave, with an epitaph full of disconsolates, and inconsolables, and what not. To say truth, that is one way even for a human creature to get into her good graces; for I never heard her mention any of her dead friends without a great deal of kindness and tender regrets; but we are none of us willing to purchase her favour at that rate.

As for the living, they have the misfortune never to be to her liking. Ordinary objects of charity, we are ordered never to suffer to come near her; she says she cannot bear to hear their lamentable stories, for that they tear her poor feelings in pieces. Besides, she has discovered, that most of them really deserve no compassion, and many sensible worthy people of her acquaintance have cautioned her against giving way to her sensibility in that way; because, in such cases, the compassion of individuals is hurtful to society. There are several poor relations of her husband's, who, if it had not been for a settlement he made in her favour, a short while before his death, would have had, I am told, by law, the greatest part of his fortune, to whom she never gave a shilling in her life. One little boy, her husband's godson, she consented to take into the house; but she turned him out of doors in less than a week, because of a blow he gave to *Fidele*, who was stealing his bread and butter.

Some of the other members of the family are almost tempted to steal bread and butter too. Mrs Sensitive is an œconomist, though she spends a great deal of money on these nasty dogs and monkeys, and contrives to pinch it off us, both back and belly, as the saying is: The chambermaid has given her warning already on this score; and the boy says, he will only stay till he is a little bigger. As for me, she is pleased to say, that I am of an order of beings superior to the others; and she sometimes condescends to reason with me. She would persuade me, Sir, that it is a sin to eat the flesh of any bird

bird or beast, and talks much of a set of philosophers who went naked, I think, who believed that people were turned into beasts and birds; and that therefore we might chance to eat our father or mother in the shape of a goose or a turkey. And she says, how delighted she would be in the society of those naked philosophers, and how much their doctrines agree with her fine feelings; and then she coaxes me, and says, that I have fine feelings too: but indeed I have no such feelings belonging to me; and I know her greens and water don't agree with my feelings at all, but quite to the contrary, that there is such a grumbling about me.—And as for people being changed into birds and beasts, I think it is Heathenish, and downright against the Bible; and yet it is diverting enough sometimes to hear her fancies about it: and I can't help having my fancies too, as t'other morning, when the great horned owl sat at table by her, on the chair which she has often told me her dear dear Mr Sensitive used to occupy, and the poor creature looked so grave, and sat as silent as mum-chance.—But then she was so kind to the owl! I don't know what her squirrel was changed from, but it is always getting into some odd corner or other. 'Twas but yesterday I got a sad scold for offering to squeeze it when it had crept Lord knows how far up my petticoats: and my mistress was in such a flurry, for fear I should have hurt it. She lets it skip all about her without ever starting or wincing, for all her feelings are so fine. But these fine feelings are not like the feelings of any other body; and I wish to get into the service of some person who has them of a coarser kind, that would be a little more useful. If Mrs Heartly therefore continues in her resolution of quitting Lady Bidmore's on account of that old Lady's want of feeling, I would be very much obliged to you to recommend me to the place. I think I can bear a pretty good hand at a rubber and hard brush; and as for keeping the furniture clean, it will be perfect pastime only, in comparison of my mornings cleaning out Mrs Sensitive's living collection. I hope Lady Bidmore, from her education, has never heard any thing of the naked philosophers; and if any other set have taught her, that people are changed into Commodes, Chests of Drawers, or Bedsteads, it signifies very little, as we shall take exceeding good care of them, and the belief will have no effect on our dinners or suppers.—I am, &c.

BARBARA HEARTLESS.

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